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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the collaborative writing process of a group of executives at a financially unstable computer software company as they wrote a business plan to encourage investment in the company and to determine how the process affected the corporate structure. Data were collected from field notes, tape recorded meetings, open ended interviews, and discourse based interviews compiled during visits to the company from three to five days a week for approximately eight months. During the collaborative invention process two significant things happened: (1) for the first time, the vice presidents made large scale decisions without the approval of the president, and (2) it was discovered that the company president had mismanaged the finances, and his autonomy was reduced. Thus, the collaborative writing process influenced the corporate structure as well as what was written. The process of collaboration reflected the change in authority of the participants by ultimately proceeding along the lines of the production group's new team committee approach. The study indicated that writing even a brief passage from the plan involved complex social processes, and suggested that teachers might do well to recognize this reciprocal relationship when integrating collaborative team projects into their technical, business, and professional writing courses. (HTH)

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WRITING IN AN EMERGING ORGANIZATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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In a report on their investigation of writing in the Vai (Liberia) culture, Scribner and Cole (1981) point out that our perceptions of writing -- writing problems, the "writing crisis" -- is dominated by our knowledge of academic writing.

> . . . Most of our notions of what writing is about, the skills it entails and generates, are almost wholly tied up with school based writing. . . This approach binds the intellectual and social significance of writing too closely to the image of the academic and the professional member of society. . . (1981, p.76)

Scribner and Cole argue for the need of a body of research on non-academic writing:

> . . . What is missing in this picture is any detailed knowledge of the role and function of writing outside of school, the aspirations and values which sustain it, and the intellectual skills it demands and fosters. (1981, p.76).

Such studies can be useful for two reasons: First, they provide insight into writing as a social process. Recent case studies in non-academic settings have attempted to focus on the writer's interpretations of social context and the social interaction that the writer engages in while writing. Second, knowledge about writing in non-academic contexts can inform the teaching of writing -- especially technical, business, and professional writing. By learning more about non-academic contexts for writing, we are learning more about the kinds of rhetorical demands faced by many of our college graduates.

One major new source of information about writing in

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non-academic settings has been the findings of a number of recent surveys (Van Dyck, 1980; Faigley & Miller, 1982; Bataille, 1982; Golen & Inman, 1983; Barnum & Fisher, 1984; Anderson, in press). These surveys tell us that writing on the job a) is a complex act, one which requires workers to address diverse audiences for diverse purposes, and b) fills important functions for both the writers and their organizations. Yet, while these surveys provide some valuable information about the processes and functions on such writing, they do not yield information that describes these processes and functions in terms of the social context within which the writing is done. Scribner and Cole call for research into non-academic writing that does.

> Since our social order is so organized that access to better-paying jobs and leadership positions commonly requires writing, there are. . . powerful economic and political incentives at work to encourage interest. . . Ethnographic studies of writing in different communities and social contexts. . . might help broaden existing perspectives. (1981, p. 84)

To date there have been few investigations that have explored the social aspects of writing in specific non-academic contexts. Paradis, Dobrin, and Miller (in press) note that one consequence of the lack of this type of research is that the complexity and significance of writing in some non-academic settings often goes unrecognized and is little understood. They speak specifically of writing in an industrial setting:

> Writing is commonly viewed as a pragmatic routine of transferring and archiving information; it is not often seen as a social process that creates and sustains the personal and professional relationships of individuals. . . Nor is it believed that writing activities can deeply influence the inner workings, and thus the success, of the industrial organization.

Recent research has uncovered some valuable information about the relationship between writing and organizational contexts. In particular, such research has begun to discover a) how social and organizational contexts influence writing and b) how writing influences the organization.

Social and Organizational Contexts Influence Writing

By exploring the meanings that writers attribute to their rhetorical choices, Odell and Goswami (1981) and Knoblauch (1980) present evidence that these choices are very much socially motivated. That is, writers' rhetorical choices result from their conceptions of their rhetorical situations -- conceptions which have been significantly influenced by the writers' interpretations of their social and organizational contexts. While these investigations indicate that writers' conceptions of rhetorical situations are expressions of social and organizational contexts, they do not tell us how these conceptions arose. They do not detail the sources of, for example, the writers' conceptions of audience, purpose, or ethos; nor do they tell us how these conceptions evolved over time. Thus, this leads to the first set of research questions that guided my research:

> In a given non-academic setting, how are writers' conceptions of rhetorical situation formulated over time? How do writers' perceptions of their social and organizational contexts influence the formulation of these conceptions of rhetorical situations?

While the previously mentioned investigations focused mainly on completed texts, other research in non-academic

organizations has begun to explore the influence of context on actual writing processes.

The research cited by Bazerman (1983), and the findings of Selzer (1982) and Odell (in press) indicate that invention processes in various non-academic settings involve many types of social interactions, such as face to face dialogue, formal and informal meetings, brainstorming sessions, phone conversations, etc. Through such social interactions, the writing process is influenced by interpretations of the organizational context. For example, Odell analyzed a case of social invention and found that the writer employed heuristic strategies to gather and consider information -- strategies which were influenced by the writer's interpretations of the demands of the office in which she worked.

To better understand how context influences writing processes in a non-academic organization, my research investigated the writing of a document from its inception to its completion in order to answer a second set of research questions:

> What are the social elements of writers' composing processes? How do writers' perceptions of their organizational contexts influence these processes?

Writing Influences Social and Organizational Contexts

None of the investigations cited in the previous section focus on the role of composing in the development of an organization or social group. Faigley (in press), however, calls for research that does. Faigley suggests that future research into writing in non-academic settings needs "to study how

individual acts of communication (including writing) define and organize social groups." The findings of Paradis, Dobrin and Miller (in press) have begun to uncover aspects of the role that composing can play in the development of an organization. In an industrial organization, the researchers found that writing was "a primary means of bringing the activities of different groups and individuals into phase with one another." Thus, writing serves an organizing function.

To date, however, there has been little research which has explored in detail how writing in a non-academic organization shapes that organization -- possibly because previous research has been conducted in organizations that are so well-established that the effects of composing on the organization may be difficult to perceive. My research assumed that by investigating writing in a forming community, the organizing function of writing can be explored. Thus, my final research question was:

> How do writing processes shape the organizational structure of an emerging organization?

To answer this question I conducted research at a newly formed company in which writing was an important element of the workers' jobs. Specifically, I investigated the collaborative writing process of a group of executives of a computer software company as they wrote a significant company document.

Theoretical Assumptions

My guiding assumptions are summarized as follows:

* Rhetorical discourse is situated in time and place, and as such is influenced by particularities of that time and place, such as exigence, audience, purpose, and ethos. (See, for

example, Cicero's concept of "propriety" in Orator, XX-XXII.)

* The rhetor conceives of these situational factors through interactions with persons, events, and objects that exist external to the rhetor. [See, for example, Consigny's (1974) mediation between Bitzer (1968) and Vatz (1973).] Through such interactions, social groups arise. (See Mead, 1956; Blumer, 1969).
* The researcher attempts to explore human interaction as it is evident in social and cultural settings. Ethnographers look at individuals and their symbolic actions in terms of the groups or communities in which they live and work (Mead, 1956).
* A microscopic investigation of important parts of a culture can elicit an understanding of that culture. Such an event can be understood "as a unique, individual, peculiarly eloquent actualization -- an epitome -- of it" (Geertz, 1965, p.154). Thus, the whole can be extrapolated from a very small part.
* Individuals act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to the persons events and objects of their worlds. In order to understand a participant's behavior, the researcher must elicit these meanings from the participants (Blumer, 1969).
* Because any act can have multiple meanings, researchers seek diverse interpretations of the acts under study. This can be achieved by exploring participants' actions from differing points of view, and collecting data which concerns

these actions through several methods (Denzin, 1970; Shatzman & Strauss, 1973).

* The researcher is the primary research instrument, and as such he or she must play a dual role. On one hand he or she must develop an empathetic relationship with the individual under study in order to see from the participant's perspective. At other times the investigator must distance him or herself to view the action from the observer's outside perspective (Wilson, 1977).

Procedures

The Setting. Microware, Inc., founded in January 1982, is a company in a Northland State University (NSU) project known as the Start-Up Project. (Note: all names are pseudonyms.) This project was designed to help spawn new high technology companies -- "start-up" companies. Microware was founded by a group of ten NSU undergraduate and graduate students. Of these 10 original founders, five actually held the top management positions in the company. In the Spring of 1983, one year after incorporating, the company's personnel consisted of approximately 25 full-time employees. The company was also served by a Board of Directors, a law firm, and by outside consultants.

Data Collection. I visited the company from 3 to 5 days a week for approximately 8 months. Each visit lasted from 1 to 8 hours. Most of my data were collected during formal and informal staff meetings in offices, hallways, and open areas in two different Miroware buildings. My key informants were the five top executives, two middle managers, and two outside consultants. I collected data four ways:

1) Field notes (Shatzman & Strauss, 1973). These consisted of observational notes (ON), theoretical notes (TN), and methodological notes (MN). In all, I collected approximately 400 pages of field notes.

2) Tape recorded meetings (TRM): I was able to tape record two crucial meetings that concerned the writing of the document that was the central focus of my research results.

3) Open ended interviews (OEI): I employed open-ended interviews to record the participants accounts of the history of the company.

4) Discourse-based interviews (DBI): One version was modeled after the method developed by Odell, Goswami and Herrington (1983). A second version was an adaptation of that method: I collected the drafts of a piece of writing from the first draft to the final draft. During interviews with writers and readers, I compared passages from early drafts with a corresponding passage from the final drafts. I then asked if the earlier version could have been kept as was. My intention was to stimulate the participants to discuss the meanings of the revisions. In all, I conducted approximately 30 open-ended and discourse-based interviews.

Data Analysis. Data analysis followed the Constant Comparison Method of Glaser and Strauss (1967): As I reviewed the data chronologically I established analytical categories and the properties of those categories. Some of the categories were unique to the particular setting that I studied, categories such as "promotion reality." Other categories, such as "ethos," were concepts that connected participant behavior to my theoretical

assumptions. After establishing categories, I linked them to form the major theme and sub-theme. The themes, which are explained later in this report, provided the framework for answering the research questions.

In general, my analysis describes the writing of an important company document, Microware's 1983 Business Plan. This analysis explains the relationship between the writing of the Business Plan and the organizational context within which it was written. In particular, I focused on two rhetorical choices that epitomized the interdependence of the organizational context and the process of writing the document.

Results: Writing a Business Plan.

Introduction. The results of this study show how the writing of Microware's 1983 Business Plan both shaped and reflected the company's organizational context. My analysis of this reciprocal relationship between writing and the organization begins with an overview of the exigence for writing the 1983 Business Plan.

In general, the exigence for writing was closely tied to the financial status of the company. On August 25th, 1983, less than two years after it began, Microware was on the brink of bankruptcy. The company was not generating any sales revenues, because it had yet to complete any marketable software products. In addition, the venture capital investments that it had received in its first year and a half were nearly depleted. In late July, 1983 the company hired a consultant, Dr. Bob Hatlin, to help improve the company's production system. Hatlin worked with the those who headed various parts of the company's

production effort, the company's four Vice Presidents and several other managers. He helped them devise an organized production system, which required that each segment of the company work as a team; programming, quality control, marketing, and finance would all be integrated in a chronological sequence of steps geared to produce finished, marketable software products. Each of the four Vice Presidents would control certain aspects of this system, and the President was to monitor the overall operation.

Unfortunately for Microware, the financial crisis was already upon it by the time that Hatlin's production system had been designed. Since this new system could not immediately save the company, the President and Vice Presidents agreed that the immediate solution to the crisis was to appeal to outside investors to save the company by investing in it. They agreed that the primary way that they would attract investors was to write a Business Plan which would explain the company's history, its purpose and its goals for the next five years.

On October 13th, 1983 the executives met to make the final revisions to the new Business Plan. During this meeting, which lasted approximately 2 hours, the executives collaborated on dozens of rhetorical choices. Two of these choices, however, took up approximately 30 minutes of the meeting. This 30 minute segment concerned a brief, but particularly controversial passage of the Plan. The passage was one of a list of statements under the heading "1984 Milestones." Before the passage was revised, it read:

* Purchase of sophisticated computer graphics production lab

> to generate graphic frames used in laserdisc/microcomputer consumer products (Graphics Systems Corporation's Image Animation System).

The revised passage read:

> * Initial staged development of sophisticated computer graphics production lab to generate graphic frames used in laserdisc/microcomputer consumer products (contingent upon capital raising).

Whereas the original stated that the company would buy an entire computer graphics lab in 1984, the revised passage stated that the development of the lab would be done in stages and this development would depend on whether the company received enough money to do so. While these changes may not seem to be particularly significant, the process of making these rhetorical choices had a profound impact on the organization. In addition, these choices involved very complex social interactions. In order to understand the relationship between the writing of the 1983 Business Plan and the organizational context of Microware, the following briefly summarizes the process of collaboration that began on August 25th, 1983.

The Writing Process: A Chronology. Whoever had power to establish the company's goals had a large measure of control over the evolution of the company. The company's goals influenced action; they gave direction to the day to day activities of the employees and they were the means of attracting much needed venture capital investment. Since Microware's goals were established in the Business Plan, the writer of that Plan wielded a powerful control over the company's future. Originally, the 1983 Business Plan was to have been written by the company's President, Bill Alexander. Bill

had written the company's first Business Plan in 1982 and he assumed that he would be in control of writing the new one as well. In general, Bill wielded control over all large scale company decisions, and had done so since the company was founded in 1982. From Bill's point of view, he would collaborate with the other executives only if he needed to use them to provide some technical information for the Plan. Thus, on August 25th, 1983 the President of Microware began to write the company's vitally important 1983 Business Plan. The Vice Presidents, however, inspired by the newly designed production system, wanted the writing of the new Plan to be a team project.

Several days after Bill began the Plan on his own, he left town on a week-long business trip. While he was away, the Vice Presidents began to work on the new Business Plan in a manner similar to the way they were running the company's new production system: Each of the Vice Presidents took responsibility for his area of expertise and together the group began to consider how the Plan should be written. During this collaborative invention process two significant things happened: 1) for the first time ever, the Vice Presidents made large scale company decisions without the approval of the President; and 2) the Vice Presidents came to believe that the financial crisis occured not only because the company had suffered from a previously unorganized production system, but also because the President had seriously mismanaged the company's finances. The latter discovery arose as the Vice Presidents tried to organize the company's financial records for the new Business Plan. As a result of the financial revelation, Microware's Board of

Directors decided in a dramatic and emotional meeting that the President's autocratic rule must end. Thus, the act of writing led to a change in the corporate structure. That is, the writing process not only influenced the substance of what was written, but also influenced the organization.

In addition, the change in the authority stucture also had a reciprocal influence on the writing process. When Bill returned on September 7th, the Board imposed a new structure of authority on the company's top management -- a structure based upon the collaborative process that had recently developed among the Vice Presidents. The President and the four Vice Presidents were all appointed to be members of an Executive Committee. This Committee had ultimate authority in the company. Each member contributed his own expertise to the Committee, and decisions were made by concensus. Shortly thereafter, on September 11th, the Executive Committee officially stipulated that the process of writing the 1983 business Plan was to be a collaborative process: each member of the Committee was to write the section(s) of the Plan that dealt with his area of expertise. Once these sections were completed, the Committee planned to hold a meeting in which they would collaboratively revise the Plan and produce a finished product. Thus, while the writing process enabled a change in the company's authority structure, that change, in turn, affected the writing process.

The Board of Directors hoped that collaborative management would foster a team approach to decision-making. They hoped that the President would become a part of that team. Bill, however, had only reluctantly accepted the new authority structure. He

claimed that it was inefficient and would not work. For a month after September 11th, many major decisions were made only after bitter arguments between the President and the Vice Presidents. In addition, the collaborative writing process that the Executive Committee sanctioned did not proceed as planned. A few of the Vice Presidents produced incomplete or poorly written sections for the new Plan. After several weeks the Executive Committee decided that the President should complete a draft of the Plan on his own, and then the Committee could meet to revise it.

After taking over the task of writing again, Bill came to feel that little had really changed. Bill acted as if he was still the company's voice, and that he had de facto control of the company because of it. On October 5th, he was completing the Plan and he told me that the way this plan was being written was the same way that he had written the 1982 Business Plan:

> I have not changed the way I have put together the Business Plan. What has changed is the others' attitudes towards this process. Their input is minimum, but their conception of their input is maximum. The process hasn't changed, they just think it has changed. (ON, 10/5/83)

Bill was sure that there would be no big objections to any part of the Business Plan when the management group met to discuss it. "The only thing they do is read what I write and make comments on grammar and little things. That is not a significant change in the process, but they think it is" (ON, 10/5/83). From Bill's point of view he had the significant power in the company because he was the one making the substantive rhetorical choices in the Business Plan. He was the one setting the company's goals. The Executive Committee, according to Bill, was only

concerned with minor stylistic issues, not content choices. Bill appeared to be as much in control of the company at this point as he was before the Board changed the structure of authority. On October 13th Bill discovered that this was not so. As noted earlier, on that date the Executive Committee met to make final revisions to the draft of the Business Plan. During that meeting the President and the Vice Presidents engaged in a climactic confrontation for control of the company -- a confrontation that was stimulated by the graphics lab passage.

The conflict over the graphics lab passage reflected two basic themes of the organizational context. These themes help to explain the rhetorical activities of the executives. The following two sections first discuss the nature of these themes and then show how the themes related to the executives collaborative writing process.

Organizational Context: Themes. Two closely related themes explain the organizational context of Microware: Promotion vs. Production and Entrepreneurial Control vs. Committee Management. These themes describe opposing views of reality. These opposing realities gave rise to conflicting views of the rhetorical context for writing the 1983 Business Plan.

The President held a promotional view of reality, a view described by an informant who worked with him:

> (He) think(s) that what is, is what you can convince somebody else it is, or what you can convince yourself it is, or what you can convince the bank to keep paying (for) to promote what it is. (OEI, 7/14/83).

During Microware's first year and a half, when he controlled the company, Bill made company decisions on the belief that if he

could convince employees and investors that the company could achieve a certain goal, then the company would actually achieve that goal. Bill's primary promotional strategy was to excite his audience by describing long-term prosperous effects of an immediate cause -- a cause that Bill would want enacted. For example, during a September 20th, 1983 meeting, Bill tried to convince one of the Vice Presidents that Microware should purchase a highly specialized type of computer system. In doing so, Bill employed two persuasive strategies: 1) he emphasized the profits that Microware would make from the sale of the specialized software packages that could only be produced with the proposed system, and 2) he argued as if it was the proposed system that would do all the work necessary to produce profitable software. He never discussed the role or capabilities of Microware's production staff. While this meeting was an instance of internal promotion, the President relied on similar tactics when promoting the company to outsiders. Sales pitches to potential investors on the great production potential of Microware purposefully glossed over production details.

Because of Bill's presidential authority, his promotional view was an extremely powerful force within the company. Bill's authority stemmed from his entrepreneurial ambition. He had been the company's entrepreneurial leader through most of the company's first two years. That is, he had generated the initial ideas, spirit, and impetus for the company, and had wielded controlling authority over all of the company's operations; he had been the only one who could make important company decisions on his own. Through his entrepreneurial leadership, the company

reflected of his point of view. In fact, Microware came into existence primarily on the strengths of Bill's promotional vision. As Bill stated, he created the company in 1982 largely by writing the company's 1982 Business Plan:

> It (the 1982 Business Plan) was everything. Without a product, without money, without furniture, without machines, without anything, the Business Plan (was) it. That's your whole case for existence. That's what attracted money. That's what kept us in the (Start-Up) program. That's what got most of the Board members into it. That's what got a lot of the employees into it. It did a lot of things. (OEI, 7/18/83)

In spite of the importance that Bill attributed to it, the writing of the 1982 Business Plan had been criticized by a Northland State professor, Dr. Murphy, who had been advising the young company during its inception. Murphy had urged Bill and the other founders to develop an effective production system first, then write a Business Plan and promote the company to investors. Instead, Bill wrote a Business Plan before the company was able to produce marketable software.

Clearly, the 1982 Business Plan had been a success in one important way: it attracted outside support and investments. In a more significant way, however, it was a failure: it inhibited successful production by setting far-reaching goals without providing a production plan designed to achieve those goals. For the first year and half the company's software production floundered, because the company was built upon a promotional vision, and not upon a clear plan of production. As a result, the company achieved a tenuous existence: able to survive on outside investment, but unable to produce profit generating products. Hence, there was a serious flaw in Bill's promotional view: Persuading investors and employees to believe in his goals

did not guarantee that the company could achieve those goals.

By the Fall of 1983 the President's authority and vision faced opposition from the Vice Presidents, who had developed a production view of reality. This view grew out of the design of the new production system spawned by Dr. Hatlin. Before Hatlin arrived, the production organization was what one Vice President called, "one fluid mass" (ON, 4/15/83). The production managers struggled unsuccessfully to organize all of the production ingredients needed to produce profitable software. After Hatlin, the Vice Presidents and several other managers had clearly distinguished the different elements of production and organized them into a team production system.

Those who held a production view of reality believed that one could only show that something could happen by pointing, not to the future, but to the past. The primary strategy of those who held this view was to base projections of future activity on past and present performances, so that there was an integrated, chronological sequence of steps connecting the past to the future. For example, in late August 1983 three managers who held a production-oriented view proposed that the company produce a new line of computer games. The managers' argument was based upon a detailed sequence of steps, built upon certain already demonstrated production capabilities. This sequence integrated all elements of production from programming to sales, and led sequentially to the projected outcomes: marketable products in time for the Christmas 1983 selling season. This type of production point of view -- which put all of the company's operations under the guidance of a management team -- gave rise

to a committee management authority structure.

Rhetorical Context: Themes. The differences between the President's promotional/entrepreneurial view and the Vice Presidents' production/committee management view spawned differing conceptions of the rhetorical situation for writing the 1983 Business Plan. The collaborators held essentially similar views of their audience and purpose, but held significantly different views of the exigence that spurred the collaboration, and the ethos that should be projected by the Plan.

Everyone agreed that the purpose of the Business Plan was to show what the company produced, what it would produce in the future, how the company was structured, how much money the company was seeking, and how much control the major investor would have by investing that amount. They also agreed that the primary audiences for the Plan were: 1) approximately 30 venture capitalists, and 2) the company's employees, since the completed plan would give guidance to their work.

The collaborators held differing views, however, concerning the exigence for writing, the financial crisis. While the President believed that poor production led to the exigence for writing, the production group (the Vice Presidents) came to believe that the exigence arose in part because the company's finances had been mismanaged by the President.

The collaborators clearly differed in their conception of the ethos that the Plan should project. The President, through his promotional view, wanted to write a Plan that expressed a bold, risk-taking ethos -- the kind of ethos necessary, he

thought, to attract investors. Bill sought to show that Microware was innovative and capable of fast growth. He decided that he could do this by including in the Business Plan a projection that the company would soon purchase an exciting new computer graphic production system -- the graphics lab -- and begin producing a whole line of sophisticated computer graphic software products. "This must be in the Business Plan," he said on September 8th.

The production group, on the other hand, was very wary of the President's past record of setting inflated goals that were beyond the company's production capabilities. The Vice Presidents were also wary of Bill's judgment on crucial purchasing issues in light of some of his questionable past financial decisions. In addition, the Vice Presidents wanted the company's goals to express a carefully detailed production system. One Vice President argued that "we need to say what we've done to date, then project" (ON, 9/11/83). Projections, he argued, should be detailed and sequential over a specified period of time: "If you have 30 pages (in the Business Plan), 28 should be specific plans of the (next) 18 months, and then two pages of puffery" (ON, 9/12/83). This conservative production ethos inevitably clashed with Bill's promotional ethos.

By October 13th, 1983 these opposing views reached a climactic impasse when the collaborators tried to revise the graphics lab passage of the Business Plan. In revising the passage the executives had to answer two seemingly simple questions: 1) Should we state that we are going to purchase the graphics lab in 1984? 2) If so, how should we write that

statement? On one side was the President, who believed that Microware should purchase the entire lab in 1984. He believed that if he could persuade investors and Microware's employees that graphics lab could be implemented in 1984, then it indeed would be.

In opposition to the President were three of the four Vice Presidents. (The graphics lab had been a pet project of one of the Vice Presidents long before the company's financial crisis; thus, he had mixed feelings on the issue. He liked the project, but he still subscribed to the production view of planning future activities.) The Vice Presidents were concerned that: 1) this claim was unsupportable --they did not believe that the company could afford nor build and operate the entire lab in 1984; and 2) the project would not appear to fit with the kind of work that the company had done to date.

At stake in these apparently simple rhetorical choices were complex social issues: the autocratic decision-making power of the entrepreneur vs. the team decision-making system of the production group. The opposing views were so entrenched, the confrontation so angry, that when the impasse was reached, the President threatened to resign -- a move that would have sabotaged Microware's chances of attracting a significant investor. At that moment, the failure of the executives' collaborative writing process meant the failure of the company.

However, when the collaborative process seemed completely deadlocked, an alternative way of looking at the issue was proposed by the one Vice President who had not fully sided with the President or the other Vice Presidents on this issue. The

Vice President envisioned that the graphics lab system would develop as did the production system of some of the company's current software: in small stages. This alternative led the President to propose a compromise.

A close analysis of the October 13th meeting shows that the goal that both sides argued over was not the primary obstacle to successful collaboration. The real obstacle was how the goal was articulated -- how the goal was argued. The President argued for his goal with promotional tactics -- predicting bountiful profits from the graphics lab. However, the production group opposed that goal, arguing that it was not "realistic" to expect that the company could implement such a system in 1984. Bill recognized that this was a clash of differing views of reality: "Fine, its your idea of reality versus mine!"

When the debate came to a stand-off between the two competing realities, the central issue became the control of the company. That is, the debate over the rhetorical choices was a struggle for power. Immediately after Bill said that it was his reality versus theirs, one of the Vice Presidents (Dave) expressed the ideal of committee management: the group must come to an agreement that satisfied each one of them. But Bill countered with his one last attempt to assert his entrepreneurial power:

> Dave: I mean we all have to believe in this a hundred percent, and I don't believe in this.
>
> Bill: But we also don't have to have every [expletive] decision to be a compromise so that everybody has to agree, otherwise it doesn't even get put down on paper. That's what its been up to this point and I'm getting tired of it!!!
>
> Dave: Well, Bill, I'm sorry to say but based on past

performance, that's the way it's going to be for awhile.

Bill: Well, we'll see about that.

Dave: That's the way its going to be.

Bill: We'll see about that.

Dave: Bill, you can argue about it as much as you want.

Bill: And I'll say I'll walk out that door right now and you can finish the Business Plan. Raise the rest of the money among yourselves! See if (a major potential investor) gets involved!

Regardless of the official sanctioning of the Executive Committee's authority, as long as that group of executives included individuals separated by such different points of view as that which separated Bill from the production group, the teamwork ideal of Board of Directors would not be achieved by the Executive Committee. However, just as the process of writing the Business Plan brought this confrontation to the surface, the writing process was also the means by which these realities were merged. The compromise that finally led to an agreement on the graphics lab passage served as an instance of the cooperative teamwork that the Executive Committee was designed to achieve.

It was only when the President took on the point of view of the production group and made the argument using production's strategy that a bridge between the opposing points of view was built and a compromise was reached. After the mediating Vice President likened the graphics lab project to past Microware attempts at large scale production, the President came to see the graphics lab, not as a glamour item, but as a process -- a sequence of stages that had to proceed according to the company's capabilities. As shown above, the President thus

proposed to change the passage in two ways: 1) he revised "Purchase of . . ." to "Initial staged development of . . ." 2) He replaced the brand name of the graphics lab with a parenthetical statement that projected that the company would purchase only what it could afford: "(contingent upon capital raising)." Only when the President altered his view of the Project, and thus altered his plan to implement the Project, did he and the Vice Presidents achieve a common ground. This common ground enabled the executives to achieve a balance between the promotion and production realities. It provided the basis for a collaborative rhetorical choice. The process of writing thus provided an opportunity for the committee management structure to function as it was designed -- as a team: the President would provide promotional vision and the production group would help to translate that vision into achievable goals. Once this impasse was resolved, the executives completed the 1983 Business Plan with little controversy. The Plan was sent to venture capitalists and eventually the company attracted financial backing.

Typicality of Results. The themes that influenced the graphics lab rhetorical choices also influenced the collaborators' thinking about other aspects of the company's operation that were included in the 1983 Business Plan. While the graphics lab conflict provided a particularly insightful opportunity to view the influence of the themes on the writing process, this influence was not an anomally. In all, the October 13th meeting encompassed fifty-one decisions about the Plan. Those fifty-one choices consisted of two general types:

twenty-one content-related choices and thirty stylistic choices. The content-related choices, which included the graphic lab debate, showed the influence of the themes. The stylistic choices did not.

Discussion

The answers to the research questions form a provisional model which describes a reciprocal relationship between writing and the social and organizational contexts in an emerging organization.

Social and Organizational Contexts Influence Rhetorical Contexts. QUESTION: In a given non-academic setting, how are writers' conceptions of rhetorical situations formulated over time? How do writers' perceptions of their social and organizational contexts influence 1) their conceptions of rhetorical situations, and 2) their writing processes?

The influence on rhetorical situations: When the participants perceived a disorder in the organization, which they attempted to solve rhetorically, there arose differing views of rhetorical situation. The executives' differing views of the rhetorical situation were manifestations of their differing interpretations of their social and organizational context. These differing interpretations reflected the two dominant views of reality that were held among the participants: the promotion/entrepreneurial view of reality and the production/committee management view of reality.

The influence on collaborative behavior: The process of collaboration reflected the relative authority of the

collaborators. On August 25th when direct collaboration began, Bill was still very much the entrepreneurial leader of the company. The collaborative process reflected this structure of authority: Bill was the principal writer and voice of the company.

By September 7th the company's authority structure had changed from entrepreneurial control to committee control. The collaborative writing process mirrored this change by proceeding along the lines of the production group's team/committee approach to decision-making. Each Committee member was to write the parts of the Plan that covered his areas of responsibility and/or expertise. Final revisions were to be made by concensus.

From September 7th until October 13th the relative authority of the Executive Committee and the President was unsettled. Likewise, the collaborative writing process was unsettled, too. The authority that had officially been given to the Executive Committee, had effectively reduced the authority of the President to that of the other Vice-Presidents. In practice, this authority structure was problematic. Because of their differing views of reality, the President and the members of the production group were not yet integrated into a committee that worked as a team. The writing process was also not proceeding as a team process. The committee approach to writing the Plan had not been successful. Not everyone wrote their sections to the satisfaction of the others, and thus the Executive Committee gave Bill the authority to finish the Plan on his own. After completing a late draft of the entire Plan, Bill expressed the belief that his control over decision-making,

while not officially sanctioned, was, for all practical purposes, still intact.

By the October 13th collaborative writing session, the authority structure of the company was still in question and the collaborative writing process still reflected this uncertainty. These uncertainties reached a climax during the moments when the graphics lab debate was deadlocked. Simultaneously, the company's authority structure and the collaborative writing process were threatened: the collaborators could not agree on certain rhetorical choices and Bill threatened a power struggle for control of the company. The company's authority structure was split by the clash of opposing realities. As a result, crucial rhetorical choices concerning the graphics lab could not be agreed upon. Thus, the process of collaboration reflected the status of power within the executive group.

Rhetorical Activity Influences the Company's Organizational Structure. QUESTION: How do writing processes shape the organizational structure of an emerging organization?

The collaborative writing process played a significant role in the re-apportionment of authority among the participants by challenging the President's authority and by providing an opportunity to resolve the power struggle between the President and the other members of the Executive Committee. The collaborative process first served as a challenge to Bill's authority when the production group began to collaborate on writing the Business Plan. This challenge ocurred in two ways: 1) While collaborating, the production group made decisions

about the company's future. These decisions began a process of reshaping the company through the writing of the Plan. Thus the production group began to usurp some of Bill's control over planning the company's future. 2) While collaborating, the production group evaluated certain past decisions that had been made by Bill. These evaluations led the production group to question Bill's judgment as the company's prime decision-maker. The process of writing the Plan allowed the production group to make decisions about the company that reflected their production/committee management view of reality, and thus challenged Bill's promotional/entrepreneurial control of the company.

Secondly, the process of collaborating served as a means of resolving the climactic impasse of the promotion vs. production conflict that ocurred during the October 13th meeting. By employing the strategy of the production ethos to rewrite a proposal that was primarily an expression of a promotional ethos, the participants integrated opposing realities. In this instance the collaborative writing process achieved a balance that was necessary for the committee management structure to function as it was intended -- as a team. Thus, the writing process helped to resolve the power struggle, shaping the social reality of the top management of the company.

Implications for Theory Building

My research indicates that writing a brief passage of the company's 1983 Business Plan involved a complex social process. Within the last fifteen years researchers have begun to develop models that describe writing as a complex process. A major

process model of composing is the cognitive process theory developed by Flower and Hayes (1980; 1981). In Flower and Hayes' model the context for writing is embodied in a writer's "long-term memory," and conception of the "task environment" (1981, p.370). These conscious and unconscious aspects of context may include situational elements that influence writing, such as exigence, audience, ethos and purpose, as well as what the authors label "stored problem representations." The latter are stored plans which the writer may draw upon when writing:

> Writers do no doubt have many such representations for familiar or conventional problems, such as writing a thank-you letter. Such a representation would contain not only a conventional definition of the information about solutions, even down to appropriate tone and phrases. (1980, p.25)

In addition to the above contextual factors, Flower and Hayes also include the "text produced so far" as being a part of the context for writing.

While this model provides much valuable insight into the role of context in composing processes, some critics (Bizzell, 1982; Cooper & Holzman, 1983) argue that cognitive process models are significantly incomplete if they exclude aspects of social contexts for composing. Investigations of writing in non-academic settings begin to explain the functions of social aspects of composing in three ways:

1) These studies expand the definition of the context for writing by showing that the writer's conception of his or her social context impinges upon writer's rhetorical choices.

2) They expand the definition of writing activity to include social interaction as a part of the process. Instead of

limiting the act of writing to the moments when the writer encodes, research into the social process of writing traces the writer's activities through time, exploring how life experiences impinge upon the rhetorical choices that writer makes.

3) They begin to uncover how the "stored problem representations" arise. Flower and Hayes, by employing data gathering methods designed to keep writers from relying on these stored plans, do not explore how these representations influence writers' rhetorical choices. Cooper and Holzman (1983) explain that the Flower and Hayes' theory shows neither how these stored plans arise nor how they are used:

> With Flower and Hayes, the question of how writers are to develop plans to accomplish their goals remains unanswered, and the scripts (stored problem representations) that skilled writers unconsciously use are not described. (1983, p.288)

If a researcher observed only the October 13th writing session that ocurred during my research, that researcher might have recognized that the production group wanted to write a Business Plan that followed certain rules, such as: a) the claims about the company should be listed chronologically; b) the predictions of the future should be tied to the company's past actions; and c) the predictions of company activities should show that they are all integrated into a cohesive plan. The researcher might have assumed that these rules were a part of a stored plan that the production group shared. The researcher would not have been able to describe how this stored plan arose. Research into social aspects of composing provides opportunities to discover both the evolution of such plans for writing, and the ways in which these plans relate to the writer's view of reality.

Implications for Teaching

My research posits a reciprocal relationship between writing and the development of an organization. Teachers would do well to recognize this reciprocal relationship when integrating collaborative team projects into their technical, business, and professional writing courses. First, the team members' perceptions of social forces around them will impinge upon the collaborative decisions that groups make. Students' conceptions of the demands the course, the teacher, and their peers will impinge upon their collaborative effort. Second, the team members' collaborative effort will build an organization. Once a project gets started, the composing activities of the group will delineate the relative authority of the team's members, thus creating some degree of structure in the team. What teachers need to do is to make this process of organization building one of the primary topics of the project -- that is, in addition to the ostensible goal of producing a written product.

The Microware findings suggest that a successful organization fosters collaboration among individuals who represent different constituencies and who have differing interpretations of the organizational context. Thus, teachers should try to put students into situations in which they need to incorporate differing points of view within their group project. Like the software company executives, students who have differing points of view should be required to integrate their differing views to achieve a common goal. How can teachers ensure that groups will bring together students with differing views? An example of one way would be to simulate a product

development cycle in class, requiring groups to produce several pieces of documentation that support the cycle. Each group must be made up of individuals who will represent the needs of the various factions in a typical cycle: technical development, quality control, marketing/sales, finance, etc. Each student will first learn the needs of his or her own constituency and then be forced to deal with each others' constituencies as they collaborate on the project.

The major pitfall of the Microware collaborators suggests an important strategy for effective collaboration that can also inform the teaching of collaborative writing. From the time that the executives constructed their conceptions of exigence until the impasse that they reached during the October 13th collaborative writing session, the collaborative writing process was dominated by adversarial behavior -- behavior characterized by an agonistic relationship between those who held differing views of reality. And yet, the collaborative team approach that the Executive Committee was supposed to foster did ultimately succeed. It did so through a compromise that created a bridge of shared meaning between the opposing sides of the issue. This bridge was constructed by describing the promotion argument in terms of the production strategy. The bridge enabled the revisions that satisfied both points of view.

While it may be fruitful for writers to take an agonistic stance towards their intended audiences, the example of the Microware participants indicates that it is probably best for collaborators to seek, in a Rogerian sense, areas of shared understanding between each other. By enabling our students to

collaborate with peers who hold differing views of the writing task at hand, the students will need to develop collaborative strategies in order to succeed. In such cases teachers of writing should urge the collaborators to take a Rogerian stance toward their fellow collaborators. That is, each collaborator should try to discover the point of view of the other writer(s), state that point of view, and recognize how and in what cases that point of view is valid. Most importantly, the collaborators should be prepared to alter their own views as they strive to understand those of their fellow collaborators. The use of a Rogerian approach to rhetoric that my research suggests differs from a major application of Rogerian theory that has been developed by Young, Becker and Pike, (1970). Whereas Young, Becker and Pike urge writers to use their opponents' arguments within the writer's arguments in order to manipulate the opponents point of view, my research suggests that collaborators need to develop a negotiative attitude with each other, so that the collaborators can alter their own views to achieve a shared bridge of meaning. Bator (1980) identifies this last ingredient as the essence of Rogerian rhetoric: "The basic assumption of Carl Rogers is that through discovery of each other's points of view, we are all encouraged to revise our image of the world" (p.431).

In short, then, we must teach students to develop interpersonal skills so that, by interacting with other collaborators, they can learn the views of those collaborators. (See Goldstein & Malone, 1984 for an innovative way to focus on interpersonal communication skills during group writing

projects.) Odell (in press) makes a strong claim for the need to teach writing students interpersonal skills.:

> We need to give students frequent opportunities to practice the interpersonal skills that will enable them to function effectively in a dialogue or in a group discussion. It will not be enough to ask students to work in groups; we will have to make sure that they know how to do so effectively.

Overall, teachers need to be concerned not only with the products of collaborative writing projects, but also with the social processes that the students must undertake to successfully achieve those products.

Implications for Further Research

The implications for further research concern not what I did during my study, but what I did not do: While I carefully followed the writing of the 1983 Business Plan, I did not follow the use of that completed document. Faigley (in press) suggests that while writing research in non-academic organizations should explore the ways texts are written, such research should also

> follow the completed text, examining how it is disseminated, who has access to it, who reads it and who doesn't, what is read, what actions people take upon reading it, and how it influences subsequent texts.

If, for example, I had followed the use of the Business Plan, I might have have answered the following questions:

> Once the Business Plan was written how was that Plan perceived as an entity? How was that Plan perceived to function in the company? Did these perceptions change the company's direction? Did they change the company's daily operations? Did they change the daily activities of the company's top management? If so, how were the activities of the lower management and employees affected by these changes?

By answering questions such as these, this research would have further described and explained the influence of writing on the organization.

Conclusion

This research, in answering its major research questions, provides a model of a relationship between writing and organizing in an evolving organization. I wish to emphasize that this model is quite provisional. The research results that form this model describe and explain the rhetorical and organizational activities of a particular case, and as such can only be generalized very tentatively. While there has been little research into the relationships between writing and the evolution of an organization, aspects of this model do support results of research cited at the outset of this report. Although the particulars of my results are unique, these findings, like Newkirk's (1984) unique findings, can serve as an example in a "heightened and intensified form" of certain aspects of the relationship between writing and organizing.

Odell (in press) states that "we have scarcely begun to understand how organizational context relates to writing" Ethnographic research in non-academic settings is beginning to bring this relationship to light.

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